

WATER CORPORATION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

**GOLDFIELDS AND AGRICULTURAL WATER SUPPLY
HISTORY PROJECT**

Transcript of interview with

MAXWELL ANDERSON

Public Works Department engineer; educated at Perth Modern School (1939-43) and the University of Western Australia (1944-47, BE), joined the Hydraulic Engineer's Branch of the PWD in January 1948, worked on water supplies for agriculture and towns in the south-west, the Lake Grace area and the northern wheat-belt; moved to the Harbours & Rivers Branch (Bunbury Harbour 1952-57), to the Goldfields Water Supply Branch as District Engineer, Merredin (1957-60), to the North-West Branch as Resident Engineer Derby; rejoined Harbours and River in Derby (1963-5) then Head Office; appointed Engineer for Harbours & Rivers in 1972. Retired in 1985

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Interviewer:	Richard G Hartley
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MAXWELL ANDERSON

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Maxwell Anderson was born in Kojonup, Western Australia, on 17 June 1926 and was educated at Perth Modern School (1939-43) and the University of Western Australia (1944-47) from which he graduated as a Bachelor of Engineering. During university summer vacations he worked for the Public Works Department (PWD) on Fremantle Harbour works (1944-45), for BHP at Whyalla Shipyard (1945-46) and for the PWD on Stirling Dam near Harvey (1946-47). In January 1948 he joined the PWD as a graduate engineer in the Hydraulic Engineer's Branch, working initially on several water supply schemes for towns in the south west, and in 1949 on irrigation works at Cookernup, near Harvey. In 1950 he moved to Lake Grace for the construction of water supplies for several towns and key agricultural dams in the south-eastern wheat-belt and in 1951 was in charge of the construction of town water supplies for Dalwallinu and Morawa in the northern wheat-belt.

Anderson transferred to the Harbours and Rivers Branch of the PWD in 1952 as Assistant Resident Engineer on an enlargement of Bunbury Harbour. These works included enlarging the main breakwater and the extension of the timber jetty by 600ft to provide two further deep water berths. For the construction of the jetty several innovative methods of handling, coating and driving the timber piles were devised. The Bunbury project was the last major harbour works in Western Australia to be fully serviced purely by rail and for this a small independent railway system was operated. In 1954 Anderson became Resident Engineer responsible for all the Bunbury works.

In March 1957 he moved to the Goldfields Water Supply branch of the PWD as a Grade One engineer to become the branch's first resident District Engineer at Merredin. At that time the PWD was constructing the Comprehensive Agricultural Water Supply Scheme, the northern part of which was serviced by branch mains extending northwards and southwards from the main Kalgoorlie pipeline. Anderson was responsible for the construction of the branch mains within his district and the reticulation servicing the agricultural areas and towns such as Bruce Rock and Kondinin. He was also responsible for maintaining the Kalgoorlie pipeline and constructing all other works built by the PWD in his district including Bruce Rock swimming pool and Merredin sewage treatment works.

After three years in Merredin Anderson was transferred, in 1960, to the North-West Branch of the PWD as its Resident Engineer for the North-West, stationed in Derby. In this position he was responsible for all the PWD's operations north of the 26th parallel which included maintenance of all the coastal ports from Carnarvon to Wyndham, water supplies to the inland towns and stock routes and the gauging of some of the largest capacity rivers in Australia. In 1963 the North-West Branch was abolished and Anderson returned to the Harbours and Rivers Branch as Resident Engineer for a large new steel and concrete jetty at Derby. On its completion in 1965 he joined the Branch's head office in Perth which was then commencing two decades of the most intensive port construction activity in Western Australia's history. From 1966 to 1968 Anderson worked under John Gillespie, Engineer for Harbours and Rivers, on the planning of a new inner harbour for Bunbury.

On Gillespie's retirement in 1972, Anderson succeeded him as Engineer for Harbours and Rivers and during the next thirteen years he was responsible for the planning, investigation and development of over forty different marine engineering projects around Western Australia's coast from Wyndham to Esperance. He retired in 1985.

MAXWELL ANDERSON

TRANSCRIPT CONTENTS

Page

- 1 Born 17 June 1926 at Kojonup. Father, a school teacher. Grandfather, a wheelwright, came from Glasgow to Burra (SA), Broken Hill and Fremantle (corner Forrest & Onslow).
- 2 Educated at Perth Modern School (1939-43), University of Western Australia (1944-47).
- 3 Perth Modern, UWA BSc wartime course upgraded to BE by fourth year.
- 4 First vacation work with PWD in Fremantle Harbour; fire amongst USA submarines.
- 5 Second year vacation at BHP Whyalla shipyard, eight students from WA. Third year at Stirling Dam.
- 6 Joined PWD in Hydraulic Engineer's Branch. First year: Harvey drainage, Katanning, Albany, Collie, Bridgetown, Waroona, north-eastern wheat-belt (Beringbooding dam).
- 7 Second year: Harvey irrigation (Cookernup), Lake Grace, Dalwallinu, Morawa, Bunbury harbour (swapped with Clem Eaton); saga of Morawa tank and concrete pump.
- 8 Bunbury harbour works, Roelands quarry, railway transport.
- 9 Government funding shortage, marriage and first child, Level one DE at GWS Merredin.
- 10 Merredin hotel stay, new SHC house bought, offer of use of Cumming house (1957).
- 11 Merredin GWS, main conduit maintenance (Nangeenan to Bodallin) and branch mains plus towns of Merredin, Nungarin, Burracoppin, Bruce Rock, Narembeen and Kondinin; Ron Gawned (inspector) and Len Dickhart (foreman).
- 12 Setting out duties, Johnnie O'Keefe (instrument hand), length runners on main conduit, pumpers at Narembeen and Kondinin.
- 13 Pumper's work; Archie Wilcox on main conduit from Merredin to Nangeenan, work on wood stave pipes. Other men at Burracoppin, Westonia, Carrabin, Bodallin (Jeffries, tools carried on bike).
- 14 Jeffries' house at Bodallin, meetings with next length runner for tea. Paul Higgins maintaining Merredin town, line to Bruce Rock and Bruce Rock town.
- 15 No major bursts on main conduit, "burst at Walgoolan" excuse for pub visit. Wood stave pipes troublesome, stave collapses. Pumpers at Kondinin and Narembeen housed at pumping stations. Work of floating gang.
- 16 Main gang's work on construction of Comprehensive Water Supply Scheme. DE responsible for building tanks, valve pits & appurtenances; their locations had to be determined from schematic plan.
- 17 Alan Parker talked to farmers and agreed pipe routes; illegal tapplings.
- 18 Clerical accounting work at Northam; clerks at Merredin under Charlie Edgecombe on work related to construction & maintenance. Engineering clerk (John Beasley), assistant engineer (Peter Shaw). Very small office. New depot built out of old pipes. Materials sent out recorded but not those returned.
- 19 Bruce Rock swimming pool built for Country Towns Sewerage (Tom Allison), use of GWS plant, admonished by Keating. Design of valve pits; use of steel forming (later also at Wyndham)
- 20 Size of branch mains (12in, 14in), town reticulation (fire main determined size).
- 21 Pipe materials: steel usual; asbestos cement not favoured as early type leaked, had to keep down pressure or put in break pressure tank.

- 22 Insitu cement lining of steel pipes. For small pipes lining formed as pig pumped through.
- 23 Manual cement lining of main conduit.
- 24 Bruce Rock valve pit containing all valves for interchanging stored, reticulated & GWS water. Keating's comments.
- 25 Wood pipes (some 30in and some 24in); need for early ordering of steel plate for pipes.
- 26 End of financial year surplus used to buy plate (order to BHP), cast iron with rubber ringed joints for Nungarin BOD fire service.
- 27 Ditcher used at Nungarin BOD (old machine from Kalgoorlie), Cat. D4 ditcher used to dig Imhoff tank at Merredin.
- 28 Town retic. all underground usually from service tank. Merredin swimming pool; pool at Bullfinch built by WMC. Checking that government subsidy used only on pool – difficulties with plant.
- 29 GWS communications, track phone and PMG. No accidents but dozer fell into Imhoff pit.
- 30 Ron Gawned's way of keeping mastic joint to Narembeen tank watertight.
- 31 Building foundations of Merredin electric pumping station (open March 1960).
- 32 Visits from Perth HO people (Keating, Taylor, Idris Davies, Parker, McGlashan).
- 33 Nungarin BOD fire service upgrade.
- 34 Work done in district for other PWD branches. Treatment plant for Merredin sewerage scheme. Cold winters.
- 35 Only perk- no meter on water supply. One put in without parts but found out by kids.
- 36 Opening of stores complex. Comment by McConnell (U/S Works) on keeping engineers moving.
- 37 Sent to Derby; difficult with two small children.
- 38 Identity of GWS.